

17 March 1952

PERSONNEL DIRECTOR MEMORANDUM NO. 18-52

SUBJECT: PROGRESS REPORT BY SENATOR JOHNSTON ON STUDY OF FEDERAL
MANPOWER AND PERSONNEL POLICIES

1. Senator Johnston recently reported to the Senate on the progress which has been made by a Senate sub-committee in studying Federal manpower and personnel policies. The study group, authorized approximately one year ago, is a sub-committee of the Senate Post Office and Civil Service Committee. The scope of its investigation is government-wide, embracing personnel activities in the CSC and the individual agencies. Substantively, every major facet of personnel administration is under surveillance by the sub-committee. Although the analysis includes a review of previous Congressional studies, the 1,000 laws affecting personnel administration, and the multiplicity of executive orders, rules, regulations, and policy directives, the emphasis has been placed by the group on manpower and personnel practices in order to determine the effectiveness of personnel policies. Procedurally, this is being done by the staff through extensive interviews, on-the-spot investigations and the collection of statistical data.

2. Senator Johnston pointed out that the sub-committee's purpose is to make a thorough, objective study with the intent of bringing about improvements; he stressed that the group was opposed to superficial investigations or premature disclosures, since the revelation of startling facts acquired in this manner would imperil the welfare of the Federal Civil Service.

3. The Senator announced that the current emergency intensifies the need for a reappraisal of Federal personnel policies. The establishment of new defense agencies, the assumption of additional activities by established agencies and the large increase in the number of Federal employees have had a tremendous impact upon recruitment, personnel utilization and the degree of operating waste and inefficiency. Yet the existence of an emergency accentuates the need for additional, more efficient and properly channeled personnel. The Senator asserted that it was the sub-committee's aim to produce, as a consequence of the comprehensive survey, proposals which would be of permanent benefit to the Federal service.

4. The principal study areas were discussed before the Senate. A summary of the comments are described below:

a. Recruitment and Selection of Personnel

A study of CSC recruitment and the direct recruitment activities--departmental and field--of the agencies are

Approved For Release 2002/05/07 : CIA-RDP81-00314R000200060054-7

DOC	54	REV DATE	5 OCT 1981	BY	029725
ORIG CLASS	M	PAGES	3	REV CLASS	u
JUST		NEXT REV		AUTH:	HR 10-2

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being studied to determine if the programs are effective in obtaining needed skills. The Senator pinpointed the sub-committee's interest in the efficacy of roving recruiting teams and the presence, if any, of personal patronage influence in recruitment.

b. Transfers

Stressing the importance of an adequate transfer policy in promoting the defense effort, the Senator revealed that the sub-committee has worked from the outset with executive officials in an endeavor to develop a realistic policy.

c. Supervision

Supervision was cited as one of the most important factors in utilization. The Senator explained that the sub-committee wishes to determine if a rational plan is being used in all agencies; in particular, it wishes to ascertain if selection is based upon the possession of the qualities of a good supervisor rather than being limited to seniority or technical proficiency.

d. Incentive Awards

Confident that incentive award programs are productive of savings, the sub-committee wishes to determine if the current programs are being administered effectively and if the programs need simplifying.

e. Grievance Procedures

It is felt that too much operating time is consumed in handling grievances. The study is directed towards making present procedures less cumbersome and expensive.

f. Classification and Pay Plans

Senator Johnston decried the present tendency towards inflated position descriptions and malpractices in allocation. He pointed out that divergent pay plans are now in use and that there is no one agency responsible for supervising or controlling the administration of these plans. Accordingly, the sub-committee is studying the various pay systems with the intention of determining the advisability of incorporating the better features of the different programs.

g. Turnover

The disruptive effects of heavy personnel turnover, now approximating 33%, are being studied in order to isolate the many causes of high turnover and to recommend action which would rectify the difficulty.

h. Reduction in Force

Whether reduction in force policies can be revised in a way which will permit retention of the most efficient employees is a matter of interest to the sub-committee. This necessitates an appraisal of the factors governing priority of retention during a reduction in force and a measurement of the operating costs resulting from the substantial restaffing of government offices, due to the reduction process. The sub-committee is convinced that this is an area of savings.

i. Effectiveness of Whitten Amendment

The Whitten Amendment should be evaluated in order to judge its impact on recruitment, utilization and separation. The sub-committee is conducting a survey to determine if operating efficiency and economy of operations have been adversely affected and if the provision should be modified or repealed.

j. Utilization of Military and Civilian Personnel

The sub-committee is seeking to develop criteria which will enable the Congress to determine which positions can be handled by civilians and which ones, by their nature, must be performed by military personnel. The 500,000 civilian manpower ceiling imposed last year on the Defense Department may not have been an erroneous decision, but it should be determined if the requirement is realistic.

k. Contractor Employees

The practice of hiring contractor employees is being reviewed to determine its consistency with the objectives of manpower ceilings.

l. Overstaffing

Statistics pointing to overstaffing are being collected. When evidence of duplication is obtained, the sub-committee discusses the situation with the agency head.

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